Bailey Bunny and the Farmer's Cat
By Yu May

Chapter 1:
In Which Bailey Has a Misadventure

Once upon a time, in a cozy corner of a verdant meadow, where wildflowers danced with the breeze, there lived a family of bunnies in a snug warren.

Of all the bunny girls, one was widely acknowledged as the prettiest in the warren: Bailey Bunny. Unfortunately, she also had a reputation for being the silliest of the young bunnies, but her parents loved her for her curiosity and spirit, even when she misbehaved. Bailey's Papa was a handsome black and tan rabbit, while her mother was chocolate colored. Bailey's fur was lilac, but with tan markings on her chest and tummy similar to her father. Her baby brother, Benny, took after their father, but his blue-black fur was a shade lighter.

Bailey's days were filled with hopping through the meadow, nibbling on clover, and playing hide-and-seek with Benny. But one day, Bailey hid in the bushes surrounding the neighboring farmer's fence. And before Benny could count to 20 and shout "Ready or not, here I come!" Bailey's mother spotted her daughter hiding in the bush, and rushed to pull her out.

Mrs. Bunny shook her head as she pinched her daughter by the ear and led her home to the warren. "Bailey! You know the farmer's garden is off-limits!"

Bailey hopped on one foot as she was dragged home. "Ooch! We were just playing hide-and-go-seek, Mama! And I didn't actually go *in* the garden!"

Bailey blushed as she heard a few of the neighboring rabbit children giggle at the sight of her. Benny, who had finished counting, watched with wide eyes as he sucked his thumb.

Ignoring the other children, Mama clicked her teeth. "Pish posh! You knew full well we've told Benny to stay far away from the garden. That's why you hid there, isn't it? I ought to give you a spanking, right now. Plus another spanking, good and hard, for talking back!"

With that, Mama spun Bailey around and held her daughter tight against her waist, and planted the first three swats over the seat of Bailey's blue and yellow sundress, right beneath her quivering, fluffy tail. Bailey squeaked in surprise, then stiffened as she saw Mama raise her paw high to deliver a second spanking, as promised. But before the hand of chastisement could land, they heard Papa's booming laugh as he leapt out of the burrow. "Ho ho! What's all this hullabaloo, then?"

At the sight of his beloved wife preparing to wallop his beloved daughter, Papa crossed his arms. "Mama? What's Bailey done to deserve a smacking this time?"

Mama huffed. “I caught her hiding in the bushes by the fence of Mr. Murakami’s farm!”

Bailey kicked her feet, in a futile effort to wriggle free of Mama’s grasp. “But I didn’t go inside Mr. Murakami’s garden! I was outside the fence the whole time! Please, Papa, tell her to stop. I didn’t disobey!”

Benny pulled his thumb out of his mouth with a pop, then looked up to Papa quizzically. “She’s right, Papa! I never saw her go inside the garden…Though, I *did* have my eyes closed the whole time.”

Papa hummed and pressed a paw against his chin. “Hurm! Mama, I know we’ve told Bailey not to go inside the garden plenty of times. But have you ever told Bailey that includes the bushes outside Mr. Murakami’s fence?”

Mama’s ears stiffened, then drooped. “Well, I can’t rightly recall. But I must have warned her to stay away from that garden a hundred times, if I’ve said it once!”

Papa crossed his arms, then turned his attention to his imploring daughter. “I see. Bailey, did you mean to disobey your Mama when you hid in the bushes outside the fence?”

Bailey nodded her head vigorously, then when she realized she needed to say no to avoid a spanking, changed her mind and shook her head. “No, Papa! I never meant to disobey. I thought the bushes outside the fence were safe!”

The truth was that when Bailey had hidden in the bushes, the idea had occurred to her that Benny would never dare to look for her in a hiding place so near the forbidden fence. But Bailey wasn’t eager to admit the whole truth, not when her tail was so vulnerable to the wrath of Mama’s paw.

Papa let the silence hang, then with a sigh, shook his head at Mama. “Very well, Bailey. In that case, I think a few swats will suffice as a warning. Mama, put her down. There’s no need to give Bailey a proper spanking today.”

Mama took a sharp breath, tempted to argue with her husband, and carry on spanking her daughter for a few minutes until the argument was resolved. Instead, Mama bowed her head meekly and set down Bailey, though she did pat Bailey’s bottom lightly a few times, just to remind her of the fate she had so narrowly escaped. “Yes, Papa. Bailey, go give your Papa a hug. And the next time you sit your fluffy little tail down, remember that you have him to thank for the privilege of doing so…comfortably.”

Papa accepted the hug from his daughter, then looked her in the eyes. “But from now on, the rule about not going into the farmer’s garden includes the bushes outside his fence. No matter how tempting the carrots, lettuce, or strawberries might look, you must stay away. Do you understand?"

As her ears perked up at this happy news, Bailey grinned. "Yes, Papa!"

But as Bailey's eyes strayed toward the vibrant patch of green bordered by the fence, all she could think about was how lucky she was to escape a spanking today.

In her private heart, Bailey thought, *"It's not fair! It's not as though the plants in the garden are any different than the ones near the warren. If anything, they'll taste much better. Plus, there are no foxes, so it's probably safer anyway!"*

Papa noticed Bailey staring at the garden, then held her under the chin to get her attention. "Remember, Bailey, if you ever disobey, you have a spanking coming. And not just any spanking, but one you'll remember."

Bailey nodded, her ears drooping. At the moment, the thought of a spanking was enough to drive all thoughts of disobedience from her mind.

Days turned into weeks, and Bailey managed to keep her curiosity in check. But one golden afternoon, as the sun began to dip, casting long shadows over the meadow, something caught Bailey's eye.

Sitting on her favorite sunny spot near the warren, she caught a glimpse of something strange inside the farmer's garden. It was a shade of bright orange, exactly like a carrot, but its shape was round like an apple. Craning her neck, Bailey was sure it was some sort of animal. It had two eyes and a mouth, at any rate, and it seemed to be peering at her over the top edge of the fence. "Is that what a farmer looks like? Very strange."

As Bailey approached the fence, the orange face disappeared from her view, only for her to catch a glint of light through a gap at the bottom of the fence, between two bushes. Bailey backed away, wondering if her parents were around. But they were in the warren preparing for supper, Benny was napping next to their family's burrow, and the neighboring rabbit children were too busy eating chive blossoms to pay her much mind. "After all, Papa only said not to go into the bushes outside the fence. He didn't say anything about not looking at the fence."

Sure enough, as Bailey hopped near the gap in the fence, she could just make out a strange, tall animal, with an orange head and red and blue fur (at least, that's what it looked like to Bailey). Strangest of all, it had several small, yellow circles on its chest that each shone like a tiny sun. They seemed to be winking at her, as though beckoning her in.

Bailey felt her bottom beneath her dress, thinking about the promise she had made, and the spanking she would surely get for breaking that promise, but the mystery was too much for her young, adventurous spirit.

"Just a peek," she told herself. "I won't touch anything. I'll just look."

With a mix of fear and thrill, she felt the narrow gap in the wall of the fence. Nervous that the rough wood would tear her clothes, she pulled off her blue blouse and yellow skirt, and folded them neatly on the grass. Once she'd had a good look at the orange-headed farmer, she'd come right back, get dressed, and her parents would be none the wiser.

Even without having to worry about her clothes snagging on a splinter, Bailey had to struggle to squeeze her head through. Then she got stuck, her tail caught outside the fence. Terrified that her parents would catch her at any moment, and find her oh-so-helpless bare bottom held oh-so-helpfully in place for a spanking. Straining with all her might, Bailey popped through the hole and came tumbling into the garden, rolling to a stop head over heels.

Above her, the great, orange head of the farmer was glowering down at her, a smile frozen on its face. With a squeak, Bailey scrambled to her feet and looked for a hiding place. But the foliage inside the garden was strange to her. There were neither trees, nor thick bushes, let alone an escape hole to the warren. She dove behind some leafy greens, breathing rapidly. "I'm sorry, Mister Farmer! I won't eat any of your plants! I only wanted a quick…peek?"

As Bailey examined the farmer more carefully, she noticed that his arms and legs were stiff and wooden, like stray sticks. No, not *like* stray sticks. His arms and legs really *were* sticks, and his red and blue "fur" was really just frumpy pieces of cloth, which she recognizes as a red flannel shirt and blue overalls from her bedtime stories about farmers.

Bailey snorted, before remembering the rule all rabbit children learn: to be still and silent before a larger animal. But when Bailey noticed that the farmer's eyes were as dark and empty as a rabbit hole, she started to crack up. "Huh? You're not alive. You're just a big orange plant with holes in your head! And your hair is a bunch of straw!"

That final realization was the final straw that broke Bailey's resolve to be silent. She rolled on the ground in fits of giggles. Finally, she recognized the strange, orange plant as a pumpkin. Last autumn, her parents had pointed out one sitting outside the farmer's house, before warning her sharply not to go near. "You're Mr. Murakami? You're nothing but a great, silly pumpkin head!"

Gasping for air, Bailey sat up. If Mr. Murakami was just a pumpkin on a stick, that meant all the rabbits were afraid of nothing. Once she told her parents what she'd found out, they'd forget all about their silly rule and realize how clever she had been. There was enough food in this garden to feed the entire warren for the winter.

Then, Bailey had a vision. She saw herself sitting high on a pedestal in front of all the other families in the rabbit warren, all gathering to witness her moment of glory. Her Papa patted her on the back, before lowering himself to join the throng at her feet. "Three cheers for Bailey, Bravest of the Bunnies! Bravo!"

In the crowd, Mama held up baby Benny to see Bailey's moment of triumph, before all bowed low. "You see, Benny? Your big sister Bailey will serve as an example to all rabbit children!"

"Hip, hip, hooray!" roared the adoring crowd. "Hail Queen Bailey!"

Bailey suddenly found she wore a golden crown on her head, and a purple cape and mantle draped around her shoulders. Waving a golden scepter, she silenced the cheers. "Thank you! As my first act as your queen, I hereby decree that no little bunny may ever be spanked again! All spankings are forbidden, forever!" All the bunnies roared with delight at this news.

Rubbing her paws together, Bailey snickered as she snapped out of her imaginative world. She knew that last part about being the Bunny Queen was a little far-fetched, but it was fun to make-believe nevertheless.

Deciding that she'd need a trophy to prove that the stories of the dreaded Mr. Murakami were only a myth, Bailey tugged at the pumpkin-headed man's pants, planning to knock him over and tear away one of the metal, brass buttons that had caught her eye earlier. Bailey tugged until one of the old straps of the overalls came loose. With a flump, the pants flopped to the ground, and Bailey snickered as she found a button that appeared to be hanging on by only a thread. Biting the button in her buck teeth, Bailey pulled it free with a sharp tug.

But her plans were abruptly interrupted by a low, menacing growl. Bailey's heart skipped a beat as she turned to find two large, yellow eyes peering at her behind the carrot patch: it was a fat, cream-colored cat. It pounced, but Bailey managed to scramble away just in time, the stolen button still clamped tight in her mouth. One of the cat's claws caught Bailey's flank, so that she had to pull away with a tug, leaving a thin scrape across her haunch.

Disappointed, the cat wailed a shrill war cry and gave chase.

[End of Chapter 1]

Chapter 2:
In Bailey Meets the Malevolent Ma'dam Miu

Of course, in Bailey's mind, it was not just any cat: it was *The* Cat. Even though she had never seen such a creature, Bailey realized what it was as she felt a chill like a winter wind travel across her back. She'd heard stories of the farmer's cat, how it patrolled the garden, ever watchful for intruders. In all the stories, cats were smaller than foxes, but no less dangerous, and far more cruel.

Panicking, Bailey glanced over her shoulder and caught a glimpse of her predator, then looked for the gap in the fence, only to realize she had lost track of it in her mad dash.

Bailey's heart thundered in her chest as she weaved through the vegetable patches. Stupidly, Bailey realized the weight of the ungainly button was surely hampering her, but she was too terrified to spit it out. The long, orderly rows of plants seemed endless, and the dying light of the setting sun cast long shadows everywhere she looked.

Finally, she spotted a wooden structure, with a huge, shadowy hole in the front. Blinking, Bailey realized it couldn't be the same hole she'd used before, but she was desperate. Darting through the massive hole, Bailey found to her dismay that it did not lead to escape. To her, it seemed as though the whole world had gone dark, and the walls of the wooden fence seemed to be pressing in around her.

Of course, as you've probably guessed by now, what Bailey thought was a large hole was in fact an open door, and what she thought was part of the fence was actually a sturdy little woodshed. You might think that Bailey was foolish to trap herself there, but I don't suppose you'd fare much better if you were a rabbit who was silly enough to disobey your parents and trespass in the first place. After all, for a rabbit, holes and shadows are usually signs of safety, and Bailey had never heard of a woodshed before, not even in stories.

Inside, the air was cool and filled with the scent of must and rust. Bailey hid behind a stack of chopped wood, her breath short. With a soft thump, the cat brushed playfully against the door of the shed, and with a teasing flick of her tail, shut it behind her. "Got you! You're trapped, trespasser!" hissed the cat as she pranced on her white paws.

Bailey was still panting, close to fainting, but now that the chase had paused, she had a moment to study the cat more carefully. It was a snowshoe, with long, tufty hair. Bailey had never seen nor spoken to a cat before, but she guessed correctly that this cat was female.

Burying her face, Bailey tried to press herself behind the woodpile to escape notice, but as the cat approached she knew she'd been spotted. Darting from her hiding place on the opposite side of the firewood, Bailey circled around it and made for the door, but as she pressed her paws against it, she discovered that it was shut tight.

With no other option, she dropped the stolen button and whispered in a trembling voice, "Please, Miss Cat, I know I shouldn't have come here. My parents told me never to enter this garden. I... I promise I'll never come back again!"

The cat paused, her ears perking up. Lazily, the cat turned and strolled jauntily towards her prey. "My name is not 'Miss Cat!' It's terribly rude to call me that, without so much as asking my name! Aren't you an ill-mannered little thing, little Miss Bunny!"

Bailey started as the cat took its first step toward her, and circled around the woodshed again. The cat grinned wickedly as it watched Bailey' vain attempt to escape. Her head spinning, Bailey hid behind the wood pile again. "So…so sorry, ma'am. I don't want to be rude. You can

tell my mama to spank me for having bad manners, if you'll just let me go! Uh, my name is Bailey? W-what should I call you? "

The cat sniffed, then licked its paws, enjoying the drama of it all. "Spank you? Oh, darling, I'm afraid that's far too lenient a punishment for a wicked trespasser…Oh, and you may call me *Ma'dam* Miu, little Miss Bunny."

Tears welling in her eyes, Bailey scraped at the ground underneath the wood pile, only wanting to dig a hole and bury herself from sight, but the floor was hard and unyielding. "Please, Miss–Please Ma'am Miu! Please, let me go back to my family. If one spanking isn't enough, I'll tell them to spank me for trespassing! And…and you can spank me too, if you want to."

Bailey covered her face behind her paws, now starting to weep freely, offering up her tail and hoping that would be enough to satisfy her tormentor.

The cat purred at the sight. "Oh, my, my, my! Three spankings? Well, I must admit I like the sound of the idea of hurting you. Let's see…"

Dropping the playful act, Ma'dam Miu sprang on Bailey and scratched her twice, once across her lower back and once across her haunches. "Why don't I start by punishing you for your rudeness, and then see how I feel afterwards?"

As the poor bunny felt the sharp claws tear at her back and haunches she darted around the woodshed once more before she collapsed, sobbing and trembling, in the middle of the floor. As the world seemed to be spinning around Bailey's head, she couldn't even make an effort to hide anymore.

Ma'dam Miu chirped in the manner cats do when they are stalking birds. "Tee, hee hee! Still trying to run away, thou hair-brained hare? I see you haven't learned your lesson yet. Now, listen carefully, Little Miss Bunny. I don't know how your Mamma or Pappa punish you at home, and, frankly, I don't care! You are in my garden now, so I'm going to punish you as I see fit! To start, let's see if you can hold still and take your spanking like a big girl. First, lie on your face and stick out that fuzz-ball you call a tail. Go on, now!"

Her mind numb, Bailey rolled onto her tummy and lifted her bottom into the air, expecting to feel the cat's claws tear her to shreds at any moment. Instead, Ma'dam Miu began to bat at her prey playfully, without using her claws. The first two smacks landed on Bailey's bottom, but to Bailey they felt more like heavy blows than a spanking. In reality, Bailey's terror was confusing her: the smacks frightened her far more than they actually hurt. Bailey hopped forward and twisted in circles instinctively as she felt each smack. Finally, the cat batted at Bailey's face, then both froze as Ma'dam Miu nipped Bailey at the base of her neck.

Ma'dam Miu flashed her needle-like teeth. "You're a slow learner, aren't you?"

Then, to Bailey's utter shock, Ma'dam Miu pressed Bailey's face against the fluffy fur of her chest and purred, as if Bailey was her kitten.

Ma'dam Miu nuzzled against her prey. "There, there, my dear little darling. And let that spanking be a lesson to you about running away, you bone-headed bunny."

Feeling strangely comforted, Bailey lifted her head and let Ma'dam Miu lick her behind the ears, until her hair lay flat smooth. "Th-thank you for s-spanking me, M-Ma'dam Miu! D-does that mean you're letting me go?"

Ma'dam Miu took a moment to lick her lips as she considered this suggestion. Then she bit and snatched Bailey up by the scruff of her neck. "Mew hoo hoo! Nope! Thowwy, thweetie!"

As Ma'dam Miu launched into her dramatic, well-rehearsed monologue, the fact that her mouth was full diminished the menacing effect the cat was hoping for (though Bailey was so terrified, she didn't notice). "I'm taking yoo'th to Maff'ster Muwah'kami! He'll know juth't whah to do wiff' yoo! Maff'ter will be tho' pwoud of me'ff, he'll p'wobwee cook you into th'upper, thomehow, and then giff' me th'ome!" [Translation: "I'm taking you to see Master Murakami. He'll know just what to do with you! Master will be so proud of me, he'll probably cook you into supper, somehow, and then give me some!"]

Ma'dam Miu pawed at the door to open it. "Yoo will wue the day yoo tweth'path'd in my domain'th! Fo' I am Ma'dam Miu Muwah'kami! Maff'stah of all I th'ee! Queen of th' Garden'th! Empress'th of th' Fahm'stead! Goddess'th of the…Univer'th?" [Translation: "You will rue the day you trespassed in my domain! For I am Ma'dam Miu Murakami! Master of all I see! Queen of the Gardens! Empres of the Farmstead! Goddess of the…Universe?"]

Ma'dam Miu's eyes went wide as she batted the door with both her paws. For some reason, the door wasn't obeying her royal command to open. The cat's jaw went slack, and Bailey plopped softly to the floor, still trapped against Ma'dam Miu's chest.

Ma'dam Miu, Queen of the Garden, Empress of the Farmstead, and Goddess of the Universe, threw back her head and caterwauled. "Mrowl! Open up, right now… please?"

Forgetting all about her prey, the cat leapt for the round door knob, suspecting it had something to do with making doors open, but she couldn't get a good hold on it and came tumbling back down. "Master, I'm trapped! Lemme' out!"

Realizing she was free, Bailey ran a circle around the woodshed, before realizing she was not actually free. Not sure what else to do, Bailey pressed her nose into the corner, as if putting herself in timeout.

Meanwhile, Ma'dam Miu was progressing from denial, to anger, to bargaining, and finally to depression. "Nyah! I'm going to die! I'm a stupid, stupid pussy cat! I'll starve to death…unless…"

Her eyes rolling in their sockets, Ma'dam Miu rounded on her lost quarry, arching her back. "Unless…I *eat* the rabbit!"

Bailey hunched her shoulders as she overheard the cat's tirade, but her little heart was ready to give out. She couldn't run a step further. Closing her eyes, Bailey prayed for it to end quickly.

Ma'dam Miu spat and spluttered as she crept towards the trapped bunny, before she froze with horror. "Yes! It's the only way…but…I have no kitty bowl! How am I supposed to eat without it?"

Mewling with despair, Ma'dam Miu retreated back to the door and scraped at it with her claws, before collapsing onto the floor. "Look at me! I can't even catch a baby rabbit without screwing up! My noble ancestors would be ashamed of me! I'm the one who deserves to be spanked! I'm a bad, bad pussy cat!"

With an effort, Bailey forced her eyes open and glanced at the cat. "Um…there, there Ma'dam Miu? We all make mistakes. I'm sure we'll be alright."

Suddenly remembering she wasn't alone, Ma'dam Miu nestled in the corner, next to Bailey. "Really? Do you mean it? Do you really think Master Murakami will come to save me? You don't think he hates me, for being a stupid, pathetic, useless cat?"

"Well, I've never met any other cats, but you don't seem as bad as all that."

"Really? Well, do you think Master Murakami will spank me with a rolled-up newspaper?"

Bailey narrowed her eyes. "What's a rolled-up newspaper?"

"It's horrible! I saw Master Murakami use it to spank the dog once!"

Bailey swallowed, still not sure what a rolled-up newspaper was, except that it was something she never wanted to be spanked with. "Well, has he ever spanked you with a rolled-up newspaper before?"

Ma'dam Miu hissed. "Of course not! He only spanked that stupid dog with it a few times when he was a puppy for going to the bathroom inside the house. Can you believe dogs don't know how to use a kitty litter box?"

Completely lost, Bailey nodded her head, trying to imitate the soft tone of voice her mother always used when she or Benny got a boo-boo. "Well, Ma'dam Miu, if he's never spanked you with a rolled-up newspaper before, why are you so worried about it now?"

The cat rolled her eyes. "Because, when he spanked the dog, he called him a bad, bad dog. And I'm a bad, bad kitty cat. I can't even catch a rabbit without fouling it up!"

Bailey cocked her head. “But you’ve caught me, after all, and I have no idea how I’ll ever get away from you.”

There was a pregnant pause. Finally, Ma’dam Miu pressed Bailey against her chest and started purring. “Good point, Little Miss Rabbit. Say, what was your name again?”

Unable to relax for a moment, Bailey accepted the embrace outwardly. “I’m Bailey Bunny.”

“Bailey? Didn’t you say you’ll get a spanking from your parents once you get home? So, why do you want to go home so badly? Aren’t you afraid of a spanking?”

At the thought of going home, Bailey’s ears perked up. “Oh! Well…That’s a strange question, now that you mention it. I suppose I am afraid of *getting* a spanking, but somehow, I’m not afraid of my Mama and Papa, even though I know they’ll both be *giving* me a spanking. I suppose it’s because I know that they love me, even when they punish me. In fact, I want to go home more than anything.”

Ma’dam Miu mewed, thoughtfully. “I never thought of it that way. You know, I’ve been afraid of getting spanked with a rolled-up newspaper ever since I was a kitten, even though Master Murakami has never once spanked me. But it sounds like you’ve gotten plenty of spankings, and don’t mind them that much. Are spankings not all that bad?”

Bailey drooped her head. “Oh no. Spankings are terrible! Sometimes, it feels like they go on and on, forever. And if I ever get home safe, I’m surely going to get the worst spanking of my entire life, and probably more than one…But as long as I’m home safe, I won’t mind. In fact, I hope both my parents spank me every day and every night for an entire season!”

Ma’dam Miu growled once, then started purring again. “You’ve given me a lot to think about. The way you talk about your parents reminds me of how I feel about Mr. and Mrs. Murakami. Do you think I should ask Master Murakami to spank me with a rolled-up newspaper, for being a foolish cat?”

Bailey tensed as she felt Ma’dam Miu lick her head. The cat’s tongue was rough and scratchy. “Well, I’ve never been spanked with a rolled-up newspaper. But I know I deserve to get spanked for being a foolish bunny. If you feel guilty, maybe it will help you feel better?”

Ma’dam Miu yawned. “You know, I really think it might! In that case, I’ll ask Master Murakami to spank me as soon as I see him again…And Bailey, I hope you find a way to escape from me. I’ll be sad if I have to eat you, Bailey.”

Dreamily, Ma’dam Miu rested her head on the rabbit’s back. Bailey knew that she was still the cat’s prisoner, but for the first time since her ordeal began, she found she could control her

breathing, and felt her thumping heart start to calm. “I hope so, too. I’d be sad if you had to eat me, Ma’dam Miu.”

Outside the woodshed, night had fallen, and all was quiet.

[End of Chapter 2]